

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 22, 2013**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Douglas Gage
Peter Fagan
Rob Kurchena
Jamie Pemrick
Erin Shimp
Kate Thomas (6:40 pm)
Rob Towle
Lena Cohen

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Wil Cunningham
Lyle Jepson
Peter Amons
Bill Olsen
Steve Sampson
Susanne Engels
Jay Slenker
Ellie McGarry
Cathy Farman
Pam Reed
Patricia Aigner
Nicole Carter
Jessica Henderson

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioner Thomas.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Motion by Towle / Cooke to accept the minutes of the Jan. 8, 2013 regular school board meeting with the following clarifications:

**MOTION:
MINUTES
01/08/13
MEETING**

- Commissioner Courcelle clarified the discussion on page 3 involving several board members regarding reviewing the budget line by line. He said the minutes make it sound as if he did not want to go through the budget line by line when actually, he spends a lot of time going through the budget, but did not want to go through it line by line in a public session. Other board members agreed that was the tenor of the discussion.
- Commissioner Towle said he wanted to note that Peter Amons and Mary Moran go through the budget very carefully. He is not sure if the public understands that they do this. He said they do a great job of going through the budget.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
01/15/13
MEETING**

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Motion by Towle / Fagan to accept the minutes of the Jan. 15, 2013 special school board meeting with the correction of the date at the top of the page. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATIONS**

Written and Oral Communications - None

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

2013-14 Regional Calendar - Superintendent Moran said the host superintendent of the Regional Technical School is responsible for the regional calendar. All the area superintendents are very collaborative and they will vote to approve the calendar and then she will submit it. The proposed calendar is nearly identical to this year's.

**2013-14
REGIONAL
CALENDAR**

School Choice / Implementation - There is a summary of the new law, Title 16, Sec. 822a. All school boards must adopt the required transfer limits before Feb. 1. Rutland

**SCHOOL
CHOICE /
IMPLEMEN-
TATION**

City's number of transfer "outs" is 5% or ten students, whichever is fewer. The limit for transfer "ins" for Rutland City will be 30 students in 2013-14 and 40 students in 2014-15.

Motion by Towle / Gage to adopt the Title 16, Sec. 822a - Grade 9 - 12 Public School Choice limits as proposed and stated.

**MOTION:
APPROVE
SCHOOL
CHOICE
IMPLEMEN-
TATION**

Commissioner Caravacas asked what the Legislature has done regarding the funding. Ms. Moran said they have not made any changes. Presently the funding does not follow the child, it stays in the school of the student's residence. Commission Fagan said the Education Committee has not yet taken up any bills for action. He is drafting a bill saying the funding and the ADM will follow the student.

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Ms. Moran said this information is transmitted to the state and we will be doing public information in compliance with the law.

FY 14 Budget Ratification - Mr. Mello thanked the board members who spent time asking questions and learning more about the budget. Commissioner Courcelle summarized the discussion from last week's meeting. The budget is complex with a lot of intertwined account codes. He said the format was very efficient and he thinks it was a good way to delve more into the budget and recommended they use a similar approach in future years. Commissioner Cooke suggested that when Principals report at the beginning of each year with action planning, that they roll in potential future financial impacts; things they might see coming which support curriculum and instruction.

**FY 14
BUDGET
RATIFICA-
TION**

Mr. Amons reviewed that the 1.2% figure that has been discussed speaks to the unsettled wage contract that was not reflected in the FY13 budget. He reviewed draft #1B, which is similar to the one presented last week, but which changes the purchase of two buses and computer equipment to financing, which will save \$180,000. There are some other changes which impact the bottom line and those were reviewed. The increase of budget over budget shown in draft #1B is 4.7%. Mr. Amons said draft #2B increase is at 3.9%.

Questions and comments from Board members about the budget scenarios:

- Is it financially smart to be financing the buses. Mr. Amons said there is a budget spike in FY14 and it is accepted practice to finance a spike. The lease would be over three years. We would hope to stay on plan to buy buses in future years.
- Mr. Amons clarified that to save one penny (\$.01) off the tax rate, it requires \$200,000 of cuts. He showed different effects on the tax rate depending on house value and earnings.
- Mr. Mello said education is his personal priority. He would not like to see cuts beyond the draft #1B proposal. He said the tax rate is what gets everyone's attention but he is cautious about responding just to finances. If we wanted a flat tax rate from last year to this year, we would have to cut nearly \$2 million and that would be annually.

Motion by Cavacas/ Fagan to approve a budget proposal for FY14 in the amount of \$47,277,683.00 for approval by the voters on election day.

**MOTION:
APPROVE
BUDGET
PROPOSAL
FOR FY14**

It was pointed out that this is the amount in the draft #1B proposal and shows \$450,000 in cuts from the initial budget. It represents a 4.69% increase from FY13 to FY14.

- There is nothing being proposed by the building committee at this time which might have financial implications.
- Mr. Fagan said he is prepared to support this budget. For three years in a row, the Board has level funded or cut below the prior year's budget. He said the Board cannot do that forever. There are pressures that need to be addressed. This budget represents four cut positions. He thinks the Board is acting responsibly. Rutland City remains one of the most frugal districts in the state.
- Commissioner Gage said he has heard of districts in the southern part of the state with increases between 6 - 19%. He knows what new taxes are coming down from the state and federal. He would like to see adoption of budget #2B. He believes the Board is being responsible but people are hurting.
- Commissioner Cooke said he agrees with Mr. Gage. He said he would like to see budget #2B, which represents a 3.88% increase, because of the state of the national economy.
- Commissioner Thomas said it is up to the voters whether or not this passes. She advocates for letting the voters decide if they will approve 4.69%. If not, then she thinks it is more appropriate to look at the other drafts. There are already deep cuts and jobs and livelihoods. It is the other side of the economic argument.
- Mr. Cavacas said he supports the 4.69% budget and agrees to allow the voters to have their say. Two years ago, the budget was level funded with a 1.4% cut. The Board knew at that time the cut would catch up to us. The Board has done everything asked of us. We are starting to build up test scores and moving forward academically numbers-wise.
- Mr. Gage said the voters will decide. Last year the budget approval was within 200 votes. How do we best meet the criteria and give people a choice? They may say "no" no matter what we put out.
- Mr. Mello said the Board should be able to defend what is in the budget, not necessarily the amount. What is in the budget is what attracts people to this school district. He sees it as defending what is in it, not necessarily an amount.
- Commissioner Shimp said with rolling over the 1.2% from last year (from the unsettled wage contracts) the real new number is a 3.88% increase.
- Mr. Cavacas said he does not want to lose the home school coordinator position, it is very valuable. He also does not want to see reducing a nurse -- they have so much work, seeing the flu outbreak. He said he sees and knows the importance of paraeducators also.
- Ms. Pemrick asked about reversing the items in budget #2B and #3B. She can better rationalize having an extra couple of students in a classroom, rather than some of the cuts in tier #2B. Ms. Moran said it will be whatever the Board directs. The proposals are ranked by the leadership and they are all based upon numbers. But they can be changed.
- Mr. Courcelle said he finds this difficult but is all right with putting budget #1B out to voters. They have the ultimate say. He said backing out the 1.2%, which is not included in ballot language, but it is a real number. The Board has talked about increasing expenses and declining enrollment and what that means for the future. We will reach a tipping point which becomes unsustainable. But he supports the #1B budget and letting voters decide.

- Commissioner Towle said he reluctantly supports budget #1B. The Board has done what they could the last few years with holding and cutting back and property taxes have still gone up. The problem is in Montpelier. Until that gets changed, there will be a lot more of these discussions.
- Ms. Moran said if the Board approves budget #1B, only those items listed up to that line would be impacted. If that is not approved by the voters, we will re evaluate all information and look at the recommendations and have more discussions. Priorities for any additional cuts could be re-ordered.
- Commissioner Kurchena said he reluctantly supports budget #1B. Inflation is about 3.5%. The bulk of our increases are wages and benefits. There were adjustments in the pension program which saved quite a bit of money. He has been looking at the run period, with increased budgets and declining enrollments. For the last few years, this board has been very fiscally responsible and many cuts have been made.
- Mr. Cooke said many Board members are using the word “reluctantly.” He thinks there is more there and cannot support the budget at this time.

DISCUS-
SION ON
FY14
BUDGET

The motion for the Board to approve a budget proposal for FY14 in the amount of \$47,277,683.00 for approval by the voters on election day passed with two no votes (Gage, Cooke)

VOTE ON
MOTION TO
APPROVE
FY14
BUDGET

PERSONNEL

Motion by Fagan / Cavacas to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 476 dated Jan. 18, 2013, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #476

The retirements, resignation and leave of absence were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

BUSINESS
REPORT

Business Report - None

SUPERIN-
PENDENT'S
REPORT

Announcements

- Lena Cohen said a new semester has started at the high school and there has been a good transition. She reviewed the upcoming music events. RHS had 20 students qualify to audition for All-State music.
- Ms. Moran acknowledged the bulletin board art work at Longfellow. Students in Mr. Bender's primary art classes learned about Edgar Degas and his love of drawing figures in action and made their own wet chalk drawings.
- Northeast Primary School will be holding a Family Movie night this Friday.
- Northwest held their first skating club event last week and it was spectacular. Special thanks to the women's CSC hockey team, and parent volunteers.
- Progress Reports go home this Friday for all K-2 students.
- The Northwest PBIS STAR student assembly will be held February 4. The theme is "Leadership and Responsibility," and the guest speaker is Mayor Louras.
- Last Friday, RIS celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with a poem, songs and praise for Dr. King. Students were nominated by classmates for sharing the same attributes as Dr. King. Each student selected was announced and received a certificate stating their accomplishment.

ANNOUNCE-
MENTS

Legislative Report - Ms. Moran pointed out the VSBA handout on a World Class Education System. Board members will regularly receive the newsletter from the state associations: School Boards, Superintendents and Principals. She reviewed several new education-related bills being watched.

**LEGISLATIVE
REPORT**

Building Committee - Mr. Cooke reviewed the discussion from the last meeting. Nothing is happening with Dana School and it continues to be monitored. The buyers of the Watkins School are seeking an extension of the Purchase & Sale agreement. Ms. Moran said the delay has to do with permitting and funding. It is expected to be an action item next month. She believes it is still a solid agreement.

**COMM.
REPORTS**

**BUILDING
COMM.**

Mr. Cooke said John Rice and the administration have done a lot of work on the maintenance and deferred work plans. While this might be a good time to borrow money, it might not be the best time to come up with \$3 million. Mr. Cooke said there is a bond coming to an end in 2015 and that might be a time to go to the voters. The district has been doing major renovations over the years and has been paying attention.

Mr. Cooke said safety is a big issue that is being reviewed. Mr. Rice has shared many things being done and upcoming. Some are sensitive. Safety drills have been going well. Mr. Towle asked for a recap of safety issues during an executive session at some point in the future. Mr. Cooke said there have been some issues with parking at some schools, especially Library Avenue and Northwest. It can be hard for a visitor coming in for a short time to find parking in front. They are asking staff and faculty to park farther away. There will be new signage.

**NEW
BUSINESS**

New Business

Budget Warning

Motion by Cavacas / Fagan to adopt the budget warning as presented. Motion passed.

**MOTION:
ADOPT
BUDGET
WARNING**

Mr. Mello suggested an approach to reviewing the budget next year. He said perhaps an ad hoc committee of the Board could be established to delve in and ask questions; perhaps going to a few extra meetings and then bringing back a recommendation to the full Board. Board members said they liked the approach.

**REVIEW OF
SAFETY
DRILL**

Ms. Moran reviewed the successful drill held today at Library Ave which involved the Police Department. She said the RIS and RMS students did an excellent job and followed direction well. Students brought home a note explaining the drill. These will be held from time to time.

**ADJOURN-
MENT**

Motion by Towle / Thomas to adjourn at 7:46 pm. Passed.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary